K.G.B. Figure Called a Spy for France

By PAUL LEWIS
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PARIS, Jan. 7 — A K.G.B. officer working in Moscow told French intelligence officials of purported Soviet plans to steal Western technological secrets, according to a book to be published this month.

The book asserts that information provided by the Soviet officer, code-named Farewell, led to the unmasking of many Soviet agents and alerted Western governments to the scale and intensity of Moscow's efforts to acquire advanced Western technology.

The book says the Soviet agents supplied the French with information for 18 months between 1981 and 1982.

The author, Thierry Wolton, who spent two and a half years researching and writing "The K.G.B. in France," says he received help from French intelligence officials. A first installment of excerpts from the book was published Monday in the French magazine Le Point.

Operation Called a Coup

While details of the story Mr. Wolton tells cannot be verified, Western diplomats and intelligence officials in Paris have confirmed persistent rumors in recent months that France had obtained important information about Soviet technological spying and was sharing it with its Western allies.

One Western official recently described the operation as "one of the great postwar intelligence coups" and said he believed the French intelligence services were planning to disclose more information about it now that their source was no longer active.

Rumors of a major French intelligence success first began circulating here after the semiofficial magazine La Revue de la Defense Nationale published a detailed account of the organization of Russia's technological espionage services in December 1983, showing them to be far larger than generally realized.

The article, titled "The Soviet Union and scientific, technical and technological information," was written by "a high official" using the pseudonym Henri Regnard who said only that his work was based on "experience and recently acquired knowledge."

Its publication came at the end of a year in which France expelled 47 Soviet diplomats for espionage. According to Mr. Wolton, the article was in fact written by the senior intelligence officer handling "Farewell" and was based on the more than 4,000 documents about the Soviet Union's technological espionage effort that this source provided.

In his book, Mr. Wolton writes that President François Mitterrand personally told President Reagan about "Farewell" and gave him a sample of the intelligence material France was getting from this source during the eight-power Western economic summit meeting in Ottawa in July 1981.

The move was intended to reassure the Reagan Administration about France's loyalty to the Western alliance after President Mitterand brought French Communists into his first Government, formed earlier that year.

Several weeks later, Marcel Chalet, head of France's counterespionage service, visited Vice President Bush, a former Director of Central Intelligence, in Washington to discuss "Farewell."

An unnamed Frenchman first put the French counterespionage service in touch with "Farewell" in the spring of 1981 when he delivered it a letter from "a Soviet friend" who offered his services. This Soviet source turned out to be a senior official in the K.G.B. directorate dealing with scientific espionage.

"Farewell" could write French and claimed to have served in the Soviet Embassy in Paris in the 1960's. But because of his senior position he knew he would never be allowed to leave the Soviet Union again. French intelligence agents speculate that nostalgia for France might explain his decision to become a spy.

"Farewell" disappeared without any explanation in 1983. French intelligence agents think his disappearance may have been connected with rumors of a vice scandal at the top of the K.G.B. that resulted in the murder of a Soviet policeman.